

The Islamization of the Legend of the Turks: The Case of *Oghuznāma**

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The *Oghuznāma* represents the epic tradition of the Oghuz Turkic people. It is a collection of stories about the ancestor from whom they derived their name, Oghuz, as well as the progenitors of related peoples. The different versions offer a wealth of data for an unusual range of problems in the field of historical linguistics and literary analysis. Also, although naturally being far from useful as a historical source per se, some of its stories reflect historical events to a certain extent. The kernel of the legend must have wandered with the Oghuz tribes and their bards, the so called *ozans*, from their Inner Asian homelands to Anatolia and further on to the territory of the later Ottoman Empire, and adaptations to the new environment are noticeable. These are the first recorded legends about the origin of the different Turkic people written in different places and in different times. Oral and written versions were circulating in the vast territory of the Turkic world (Orkun 1935).

Our earliest information about the Oghuz people comes from the age of the first and second Türk Qaghanates. Their name can be found in the runic Turkic inscriptions of the 8th-9th centuries where the *Oghuz* appear as the northern neighbours of the Turks, and their tribal federation is called *Toquz-Oghuz* 'nine Oghuz'.¹ In the *Köl Tegin Inscription* the name Oghuz also occurs as an element of a personal name: *Oğuz Bilgä Tamğacı* 'Oghuz, the Wise Keeper of the Seal', the name of an envoy who arrived at the funeral of the *tegin*.² In the *Šine-Usu* (760) inscription the names of tribal federations are the aforementioned *Toquz-Oghuz* and also *Sekiz Oghuz* 'eight Oghuz'.³ There are accounts on their relationships with the *Turks* and the *Uyghurs*: sometimes they were allies, sometimes they were enemies. After the collapse of the Uyghur Empire (840) they moved from their Inner Asian homelands to the west. Between the 8th-11th centuries the territory

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1 *Tonyuquq Inscription* from 726: West side 7, South side 9, 12, 14-16, East side 22; *Köl Tegin Inscription* from 732: South side 2, East side 14, 28, North side 4, 6, 8-9; *Bilgä Khagan Inscription* from 734/735: East side 29, 32-6, 38; cf. Berta 2004.

2 North side 13; cf. Berta 2004.

3 North side 3, 5, East 1, 3, 10, South 8, West 8; Berta 2004.

north of the Syr-Darya was called *Steppe of the Ghuzz* by the Muslim writers because they were the dominant inhabitants of this territory; the term refers to the Arabic form of their names. In the 10th-11th centuries they formed a strong confederation of 24 tribes. At the end of the 10th century a group with the leadership of *Seljuk* converted to Islam, and the Oghuz ruler himself also converted to Islam a little while later. After a short time the name *Turkmen* started to be used primarily for these Muslim Oghuz. In the 11th century the Oghuz tribes invaded Mavarannahr, Khwarezm, Khorasan, Azerbaijan, Iran and Iraq, and became one of the strongest powers in the Islamic world of that time. In the 11th-12th centuries the Seljuks continued their migration and conquests in the west; in 1071 with the defeat of the Byzantine Emperor at Manzikert they finished the conquest of Anatolia and Syria. 130 years later the Ottoman dynasty took over power. In the 11th-12th centuries the Turkmen and Azerbaijani tribes migrated to the territories where they have been living since that time (Sümer 1967; Golden 1972).

The mythical ancestor of the different Oghuz tribes was Oghuz Khan whose life and deeds were told in different versions of the *Oghuznāma*. One of the first reports about the existence of this Turkic epical tradition can be found in the work of the Egyptian Mamluk historian Ibn al-Dawādārī completed in A.D. 1336. In his account of the history of the year 1230–1231 (A.H. 628) he mentions that one of his sources was a book of the Turks about the beginning of their history and about their first ruler who was the greatest ever. According to him this book was very popular among the Turks and it was handed around and the intelligent and clever people of the Turks learned the stories by heart and performed them. This remark shows that written versions were in circulation even at that time. He also reports performances by singers (or bards) with accompaniment from a *qopuz*, a lute-like stringed instrument (Graf 1990: 182–183; Ercilasun 1986: 9). Dawādārī's statement also shows that interaction between written and oral transmission was in evidence already in the 13th-14th centuries.

We can mention two other sources from the 15th century which give information about existing Oghuz narratives. One of them is the 15th-century Ottoman chronicle *Tavārikh-i Āl-i Seljuk* written by Yazījioğlu 'Ali who was in the service of Sultan Murad II (ruled 1421–1444 and 1446–1451). In his account of Oghuz and Seljuk history he mentions an Oghuz legend written in Uyghur letters. He also records a fragment written in rhythmical lines possibly performed by singers (Orkun 1935: 70–72; Sümer 1959: 366; Bakır 2008). One of his contemporaries was Šukrullāh who was in Tabriz as an envoy of Murat II in the middle of the 15th century. He also saw an *Oghuznāma* with Uyghur script there (Orkun 1935: 73–74; Sümer 1959: 387). In the second half of the 17th century Abu'l-Ġāzī Bahādūr Khan, the ruler of Khiva and the author of the chronicles *Šajara-i Tarākima* and *Šajara-i Türk*, wrote down the genealogy of the Oghuz-Turkmens. In the preface of his first book he refers to the Turkmen tribal elite who asked him to compile a correct genealogy for them: “*The Turkmen mullahs, sheiks and tribal leaders learnt that I am expert in history so one day they all came to me and pointed*

out that there are a lot of *Oghuznāma* versions known to us but none of them is good, all of them are incorrect and contradict each other. It would be good to have an consistent, correct and reliable history. They asked me and I accepted their wish.” (Kononov 1958. Text lines 23–28).⁴ From this quotation we can see that still in the 17th century different oral epical traditions of the Oghuz Turks existed in Khwarezm. As for the written tradition we can easily separate two groups: the pre-Islamic versions represented by the *Legend of Oghuz Khagan* in Uyghur script and the Islamized versions from the 14th century on. The non-Muslim, so-called “pagan” *Oghuznāma*⁵ was put in writing after the Mongol invasion; the date and place are debated. According to P. Pelliot (1930) the original, lost text was written about 1300 in the Turfan region; the unique copy which can be found in Paris in the Bibliothèque Nationale is a fragmentary late copy.⁶ Some scholars consider this copy to have been done in the beginning of the 15th century in Khwarezm. (Clauson 1962: 48, 184; Clauson 1972: xxiii) The nucleus of the story is a very archaic, in some respect totemic text from pre-Islamic times which reflects the old beliefs of the Turks’ shamanism and Tengrism.

The oldest Muslim version of the *Oghuznāma* is preserved in the Chronicle of Rashīd al-Dīn (*Jāmi‘ al-Tawārīkh*, written in 1310–11)⁷ and in the works of the Khivan ruler Abu’l-Ġāzī Bahādur Khan (1603 – 1663). The *Šajara-i Tarākima* (Genealogy of the Turkmens) was completed in 1659 or 1661, the *Šajara-i Türk* (Genealogy of the Turks) in 1665.⁸ Abu’l-Ġāzī’s adaptation is mostly based on the *Jāmi‘ al-Tawārīkh* in addition to the oral tradition.⁹ We also have two other fragmentary adaptations of the Chronicle of Rashīd al-Dīn. One is a 65-line-extract from an unidentified *Oghuznāma* found in the history written by the above-mentioned Yazījioğlu ‘Alī (Yazıcızāde) in the first half of the 15th century, and the other is possibly an 18th century adaptation which is found in Uzunköprü in a private collection of manuscripts.¹⁰

From a cultural historical perspective a comparison between versions is challenging. In the following I compare some motifs of the pre-Islamic and the

4 The citations from the works of Abu’l-Ġāzī are based on the editions of Kononov (1958) and Desmaisons (1970²); the transcription and translations are mine.

5 Similarly to DeWeese (1994: 501) Danka also uses the label ‘pagan’. The latter stresses that it does not carry any pejorative connotations, but only expresses opposition to the Muslim versions, i.e. it is considered pagan from the Muslim point of view. (Danka 2019: fn. 1)

6 For the latest research summary see: Ratcliffe 2013: 2–4; Danka 2019, Chapter 1.

7 Rashīd al-Dīn’s *Jāmi‘ al-Tawārīkh* has several editions. In my work I used the translation of Thackston 1998.

8 Kononov 1958; Kargı Ölmez 1996; Desmaisons 1871, 1874 edited in St.-Pétersbourg, reprinted in one volume in 1970. The *Šajara-i Türk* was completed by his son after the death of Abu’l-Ġāzī.

9 Desmaisons 1970: 34–36; Text 35–37.

10 ‘Alī Yazījzāde’s *Tavāriḥ-i Āl-i Selçuk* (1423), published by Bakır: 2008. Cf. also Eraslan 1992 (1995). About the fragment of Uzunköprü see Orkun 1935: 96–120, and Eraslan: 1976: 169–175. My citations are based on the edition of Eraslan 1976: 176–190.

Islamic versions. I examine some motifs such as the birth and features of Oghuz, his growing up, marriage, and his helpers.

Birth

*“One of the days, Moon Kaghan (ay qayan) waited in labour (lit. her eyes shining). She gave birth to a male child. The complexion and face of that child was blue, his mouth was fire red, his eyes were scarlet, his hair and eyebrows were black. He was more beautiful than wonderful fairies. That child drank the colostrum (âyuz) from his mother’s breasts, after this he did not drink anymore. He wished (to get) instead meat, food and wine.”*¹¹ (Danka 2019: fol. 1–2). In the beliefs of the Turks the sky had a very important role (cf. Tengrism). Khagans got the power to rule from the sky (*kök, kök tengri*). The blue (or heaven-like) complexion of the child is a kind of metaphor to show his nobility and his origin from the sky. The expression “scarlet eyes” (*közläri al*) is often used for describing bravery in Turkic tales and the “fire-red” mouth or lips (*ağızi ataş qızıl*) might signify his intelligence, as is suggested by the Siberian tales where the expression “fire breaking out from one’s lips” is often used in the sense of intelligence and cleverness (Ögel 1989. I: 133–7). Then it is recounted that Oghuz stopped breast-feeding after only a few days and had an extraordinary appetite for meat and wine. As the beginning is fragmentary we do not know anything about the father; only the mother’s name (Ay or Moon khagan) is known which also strengthens the idea of a heavenly origin. It is worth noting that most Turkic peoples consider the Sun as female and the Moon as male (Ögel 1989 I: 129–132). Our text says that Moon Khagan was the mother of Oghuz, and her name also suggests that Oghuz is supernatural, born from the divine moonlight. According to Adaeva and Makulbekov (2014) in Kazakh myths the Moon (together with the Sun) can also be described as female.

If we compare this to the Islamic versions, we find a completely different picture. In the *Jāmi‘ al-Tawārīkh* we read: *“Qara Khan succeeded his father, and he had a son who would not take his mother’s breast to suckle for three days and nights. Therefore his mother wept and pleaded, and every night she saw the child saying to her in a dream, “Mother, if you become a worshipper and lover of God, I will drink your milk.” Because her husband and all of the tribes were infidels, the woman feared if she worshipped God openly they would kill both her and her child. Therefore she believed in God in secret and loved God with all sincerity, and thereafter the infant took his mother’s breast and suckled.”* (Thackston 1998: 28) Almost the same story can be found in the *Šajara-i Tarākima* and is repeated in the *Šajara-i Türk*:¹² *“A child was born from the first wife of Qara Khan. His beauty was more than the Sun and the Moon. He hadn’t been sucking his mother’s breast for three days and nights.*

¹¹ For the pre-Islamic Oghuznāma I use the translation of Danka 2019.

¹² Desmaisons 1970²: 13–14.

Every night the child appeared in a dream to his mother and said: Ay, mother, be Muslim! If you want me to suck [your breast], become Muslim and confess the faith of the only God and declare that he is the greatest. I will not suck your breast even if I die if you will not convert into the true faith. The mother didn't dare to speak about her dream and in secret she converted to the belief in the only God. She raised her hands and prayed: O Lord, please help me and make my milk sweet for my little son. The son started to suck his mother's breast immediately. The mother neither told anybody the dream she saw, nor spoke about her conversion to Islam. It was because the Turks had been Muslims from Yaphet till Alinja Khan... But at that time the people's number and wealth increased so much that they got drunk of well-being and forgot the only God and became infidels. In the time of Qara Khan the infidelity was so strong that if a child learnt from his father that he was Muslim he killed him and if a father learnt from his son that he had become Muslim he killed his son. (Kononov 1958: lines 166-177). In the Muslim versions the genealogy of Oghuz goes back to the first man, Adam, with a long enumeration of the ancestors of Oghuz. It is stated that all the Turks originated from Yaphet, the son of Prophet Noah. In Rashīd al-Dīn's Chronicle Qara Khan was the 6th generation after Noah, but in the work of Abu'l-Ġāzī there is a more detailed and longer enumeration from Adam, the first man God created, where Qara Khan is the son of Mogol Khan. Considering the Mongol-Turkic epical tradition of the time, this is not surprising. In contrast to the pagan Oghuznāma the mother and father are concrete persons: Qara Khan and his first wife. It is important that according to Rashīd al-Dīn and Abu'l-Ġāzī the Turks were Muslims in the beginning of history but wealth spoiled them. The first milk is also an important motif. In the pagan Oghuznāma the newborn child wants to eat meat after sucking the colostrum which points to a supernatural birth, while in the Islamic versions Oghuz is *ab ovo* a Muslim who forces his mother to convert to Islam by not breast-feeding. As the mother undertakes a risk for the sake of Islam and consequently for her Muslim son, we can say that she is the second follower of Islam after a long period of infidelity. The theme of refusing the milk of a non-Muslim mother also can be found in Ötemiş Haji's description of Berke's birth. Berke was also a Muslim from birth who did not suck the milk of his own mother nor that of any infidel women. He was shown to fortune-tellers, and they said that he was the descendent of Muhammad and that the Muslims do not drink the milk of infidel women. So they brought a Muslim woman and he started sucking her breast (Kamalov 2009: 41). It has been pointed out by DeWeese (1994: 85) that in other narratives about the conversion of Berke, a similar story can be found.

Characteristic features of Oghuz

The pre-Islamic tradition attributes supernatural powers to the new-born Oghuz: *He started to speak (lit. his tongue started to come). After many (lit. forty) days, he*

grew up, walked and played. His feet were like the feet of an ox, his waist was like the waist of a wolf, his shoulders were like the shoulders of a sable, his chest was like the chest of a bear. The whole of his body was covered with hair. He always pastured animals, he always mounted horses, he always hunted wild game, then after days, after nights he became a young man. (Danka 2019: fol. 2). Precocious growing up is a motif well known from other epics of the world, as has been stated by Karl Reichl (1992) referring to Stith Thompson's *Motif-index*. The child's hairy (cf. the Muslim saint Baba Tükles's body, Deweese 1994: 330–1), animal-like appearance points to totemism. His extraordinary strength and other attributes lead people to believe in his supernatural origin, and that he is chosen for great deeds.

The Islamic versions, of course, do not compare Oghuz to animals, since it would be against Islamic doctrine, but emphasize the never before seen purity and beauty of the boy which mirrors his religious character: *When a year had passed, the child was extremely pure and beautiful, and traces of religious guidance and favour shone from his brow.* (Thackston 1998: 28). According to Abu'l-Ġāzī the new-born child is beautiful: *"His beauty was more than Sun and Moon."* (Kononov 1958: line 167). In the 18th century Uzunköprü variant, Oghuz is incomparable with anyone (Eraslan 1976: 179).

In the pre-Islamic legend we can find traces of Tengrism. Oghuz prays to the sky, and as we will see later, he gets his first wife from the sky, descending in the light: *"Oghuz Khaghan was praying to the Sky, (when) it became dark, (and) from the sky, a blue light beam descended. It was more glowing than the sun or the moon. Oghuz Kaghan walked (closer). He saw that in the middle of this light beam, there was a girl."* (Danka 2019: fol. 6–7). *"I have carried out my obligation to the Blue Sky, (so) I (hereby) give my country to you."* (Danka 2019: fol. 42). Naturally this is completely missing from the Muslim versions where Oghuz's Islamic character is stressed. Here the child Oghuz repeats the name of Allah in Arabic (a sacral language), and the infidel Turks think that he is just babbling: *"He constantly had the name of God, which is Allah in Arabic, on his lips, but no one knew what the word meant. While he constantly intoned beautifully the word Allah, the tribe thought he was singing for pleasure and that it had become a habit with him."* (Thackston 1998: 29). In the works of Abu'l-Ġāzī we find a very similar description. But in his text it is emphasised that he was chosen for great deeds by Allah: *"When he was speaking he always said the word Allah, Allah. As the word Allah is in Arabic and none of the ancestors of Moguls had heard any Arabic, everybody who heard this said: «He is a child. As he cannot speak, he does not know what he is saying.» Since Oghuz was made a friend of God from birth by Allah, may He be exalted, He put his own name in his heart and mouth."* (Kononov 1958: lines 192–197).

The struggles of Oghuz

Both in the pre-Islamic and in the Muslim versions there follow the struggles of Oghuz. But there is a great difference again. In the pagan legend he first fights against a mythical man-eating creature. He declares himself khagan, and his goal is to conquer the whole world, to subdue peoples, to make them to pay tax, and to send presents to him. He kills and annihilates those who don't obey him. Oghuz has all the nomadic virtues needed in order to conquer the world, and his life is a continuous struggle. In the Islamic versions his first conflict is with the first two wives chosen for him by his father. He repudiates them because they do not follow him in believing in the only God: "*I did not love them because they are infidels and I am Muslim.*" (Kononov 1958: 212). According to the Uzunköprü fragment he even beats them (Eraslan 1976: 180/12, 2). Oghuz has his own will and takes his own decisions. He himself chooses a wife whom he converts to Islam. For him religion is the most valuable thing in life, more important than family ties. His opposition against to family (his father, uncles, and kinsmen) leads to an open struggle for faith. After a long fight he wins with the help of God and becomes the khan of the tribal federation (Thackston 1998: 29). "*All the people were called by Oghuz to conversion to Islam. He loved those who became Muslim, and attacked those who did not, and killed them, and captured their children.*" (Kononov 1958: lines 248–9). Then he started to conquer the world, and in this struggle – we might say Jihad – Allah helps him to organize an Empire on the basis of the true faith. He is a good rider and marksman, a good strategist, and never hurts the Muslims, but kills the infidels (Kononov 1958: lines 333–4).

Helpers of Oghuz

Our next question to answer is who helped Oghuz in conquering the world? As we have already seen, Oghuz worshipped Kök Tengri, the God of Sky and prayed for his help. But also as a relic of a totemistic substratum a grey he-wolf appears in the legend. "*At dawnbreak, a sun-like light beam entered Oghuz Kaghan's tent. From that light beam, a grey-furred, grey-maned big male wolf stepped forward. That wolf (had) made a promise (lit. gave word) to Oghuz Kaghan. So it said: «Oh, oh, Oghuz, you are going to ride against Urum! Oh, oh, Oghuz, I am going to walk in your vicinity!» it said. Then, after that, Oghuz Kaghan broke camp and went away. He saw that in the (broader) vicinity of the army, the grey-furred, grey-maned, big male wolf was walking. They were following (more or less) the back of that wolf. After a few days, this grey-furred, grey-maned, big male wolf stopped. Oghuz also stopped with the army.*" (Danka 2019: fol. 16–18). The lead animal indicates to the people when to move and when to halt and what to conquer. From the citations it is clear that he is a supernatural being descended from the Sky, sent by the God of Sky. He

offers his help in the campaigns of Oghuz. “Oghuz Kaghan [saw] the grey-furred, grey-maned, male wolf. That grey wolf told Oghuz Kaghan, «Now, Kaghan, ride out with the army, and bring the people and begs¹³ (with you). I will lead you and show you the way!» he said. As soon as it became dawn, Oghuz Kaghan saw that the male wolf was marching in the vicinity of the army. He was glad and went ahead.” (Danka 2019: fol. 24–25). “Then one day the grey-furred, grey-maned, male wolf did not walk (further), it stopped. Oghuz Kaghan also stopped. Setting up camp, he stopped. It was an uncultivated, flat land. They (always) called it *Jurched*...” (Danka 2019: fol. 29).

DeWeese argues that the motif of leader wolf must have belonged to the Oghuz tribes since some fragments of the story can be found in the 12th century Chronicle of Michael the Syrian on the Oghuz peoples (DeWeese 1994: 278, 496. fn.8).¹⁴ Sinor (1982) references three legends of the Turks preserved in Chinese sources. The first one, titled by Sinor “*The abandoned child brought up by a wolf*”, can be found in the *Zhoushu*, completed around 629, and also shows the motif of a wolf. Slightly different versions of this theme are found in the *Beishi* completed around 659, and in the annals of the Sui dynasty, compiled between 629–636. The story is about a boy whose tribe was killed, but who was saved and raised by a grey she-wolf. They fled to present-day Chinese Turkestan where he mated with the wolf and impregnated her. The grey wolf delivered ten sons, the later Ashina clan, who are considered to be the ancestors of the ancient Turkic peoples.¹⁵ On the top of the 6th century Bugut stele with Sogdian script on its three sides, a relief can be found with the she-wolf and the child being suckled by it (Kljaštornyj – Livšic 1972: 71). There is hardly any doubt that this also points to the ancient Turkic genealogical myth.¹⁶

In the Islamic adaptation, of course, we don’t find this motif. For a Muslim a totem-animal is unacceptable. It is very clearly said: only Allah, the personal skills of an individual and the wealth and strength of a state, as well as numerous allied tribes and countries can help in conquering the world.

13 The word *beg* means the head of a clan or tribe, a subordinate chief.

14 DeWeese also refers to Juvaini’s account of the Uyghurs where a mythic animal likewise guides the people.

15 “No doubt the *Türks* are a detached branch of the *Hsiung nu*. They belong to the *A-shih-na* clan. An independent tribe; they were completely exterminated by a neighbouring country. There was a boy aged ten. The soldiers, in view of his youth, could not bring themselves to kill him. They cut off his feet and threw him into a marsh. There lived there a she-wolf who fed him with meat. As the boy grew up he had sexual intercourse with the wolf and made her pregnant. The king [who had earlier attacked the tribe], apprised of the boy being alive, dispatched someone to kill him. [...]. But the wolf fled to a mountain [...]. In the mountain there was a cavern [...] Therein the wolf took refuge and later gave birth to ten boys. The ten boys grew up and took wives from the outside. Each of the descendants took a surname and called himself *A-shih-na*.” (Sinor 1982: 224–5). The wolf motif also appears in the second variant, titled “*The Lord of Wind and Rain*” (Sinor 1982: 226).

16 Now this myth has a revival; this is why the Turkish nationalists call themselves Grey Wolves.

Wives

The other important motif is the wives and their role. In the Pre-Islamic Oghuznāma Oghuz has two wives: one came from the Sky and one from the Earth: *“One day, in a place, Oghuz Kaghan was praying to the Sky, (when) it became dark, (and) from the sky, a blue light beam descended. It was more glowing than the sun or the moon. Oghuz Kaghan walked (closer). He saw that in the middle of this light beam, there was a girl. She was sitting alone. She was a very beautiful girl. On her head, there was a fiery, shining mole. It was like the Pole Star (lit. golden stake). That girl was so beautiful that whenever she laughed, the Blue Sky (kök täñri) also laughed, when she cried, the Blue Sky also cried. As soon as Oghuz Kaghan caught sight of her, he went out of his mind, he fell in love with her, and he took her. He lay with her, and he took what he desired. Embryo(s) were conceived. After days and nights, she was in labour. She gave birth to (certain) three male children. To the first one, they gave the name Sun (kün). To the second one, they gave the name Moon (ay). To the third one, they gave the name Star (yultuz). Then one day, Oghuz Kaghan went to hunt. In the middle of a lake, in front of him, he saw a tree. In the hollow of this tree, there was a girl. She was sitting alone. She was a very beautiful girl. Her eyes were bluer than the sky. Her hair was (as wavy/as much) as a river’s water. Her teeth were like pearls. She was so beautiful that whenever the world’s people saw her, they said: «Oh, oh, we will die!» Then, they were (like) milk turning into koumiss. When Oghuz Kaghan saw her, he went out of his mind, fire fell into his heart, he fell in love with her. He took her, lay down with her, and took what he desired. Embryo(s) were conceived. After days and nights, she was in labour. She gave birth to (certain) three male children. To the first one, they gave the name Sky (kök). To the second one, they gave the name Mountain (tay). To the third one, they gave the name Sea (täñiz).”* (Danka 2019: fol. 6–10). The motif of light descending from the Sky can also be found in Juvaini’s report on the Uyghurs (Boyle 1958: 55–7) and in the miraculous birth of Chinggis Khan (Rachewiltz 2004: 2–5; 263–6), and recalls the conception of Jesus as well. But there is a difference; usually the light impregnates the virgin, whereas in our lore it is Oghuz who does it; the light brings the fairy-like beauty. Mating with fairies to produce the first man is a common world origin myth analysed by DeWeese (1994: 272–278, 353). By marrying and having children from them Oghuz seems to repeat the Creation of the Universe (the Macrocosm) and the Earth (the Microcosm). He becomes Creator-like.

In the Islamic versions this part is, of course, completely missing. The Creator of the Earth and humans is Allah, the Lord, and Oghuz is only the descendant of Prophet Noah. Within this framework the fairies are obviously pagans. In the Muslim versions the key of a good marriage is an agreement between two people in the love of Allah. The wife has to serve his husband’s interest even against the wishes of her own family (Thackston 1998: 29; Kononov 1958: 223–9). The children of Oghuz become good leaders and the first born son inherits his empire which he

must rule in unity together with the 24 tribes of the Oghuz. If there is concord, the dynasty of Oghuz will prosper (cf. Thackston 1998: 31-2; Kononov 1958: lines 453-470).

Conclusion

There is a clear connection between parallel passages in the different versions.¹⁷ The epical tradition was constantly evolving, changing, and being updated. In the course of migrations and contacts with other peoples, new motifs appeared and old ones disappeared. As in case of other nomadic oral traditions the stories were invented to strengthen the unity and identity of the conglomerate of tribes and clans of often very diverse origin. The similarities and differences among the narratives show that the commonalities and the differences are related to changes in social conditions. With the conversion to Islam the origin-myth underwent multiple transformations, the attributes of the core figure were amended, and by the interpretation of the Muslim Oghuz historians it became the literary articulation of political legitimacy on basis of Islam.

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¹⁷ E.g. Salor is the name giving ancestor of an Oghuz tribe in the archaic version, and in the Muslim versions he is a hero in the time of Prophet Mohammed. In the Book of Dede Korkut he appears again as Oghuz Khan's army chief. In Yazıñoğlu's *Seljuk History* the Ottomans are linked to the Oghuz Khan tradition.

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COMPETING NARRATIVES BETWEEN NOMADIC PEOPLE AND THEIR
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